THE ROLE OF FAMILY LINKS IN SETTLEMENT: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

April 2012

The resources outlined below were attained through an internet and academic journal search of research relating to the role of family separation or reunion on the settlement experiences of refugees. Summaries include the aim and purpose of the research, methodology and major findings as they relate particularly to the role of family links in settlement. The list is in alphabetical order according to the first author.

Atwell, R., Gifford, S. and McDonald-Wilmsen, B. (2009). 'Resettled Refugee Families and their Children's Futures: Coherence, Hope and Support' in *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 40 (5) (Autumn 2009), pp.677-IX

This paper investigates the factors which influence the ability of resettled refugee parents to envisage their adolescents' futures and support them in setting and achieving goals. It is based on the findings of a study of 10 refugee families undertaken in Melbourne, Australia. Analysis of the findings draws on Antonovsky's 'sense of coherence' framework to highlight the conditions which assist refugee parents to negotiate their social environment and develop realistic ambitions for their families' futures.

Methodology
- This study was conducted in 2006 among 10 refugee families who had arrived in Melbourne between 2003 and 2004.
- The families were recruited through the participation of one or more of their children (median age 15 years) in a longitudinal study of wellbeing among newly arrived refugee youth being conducted by the Refugee Health Research Centre (Gifford, Bakopanos and Kaplan, 2007).
- Adults from the 10 families were interviewed over a period of three months using an instrument developed by the researchers. This comprised a range of qualitative and quantitative visual, oral, and written tools designed to gather data on household structure, income and routines; social, cultural and educational capital; experiences of resettlement; sense of belonging and status; and aspirations for the family's and young person's future.

Major findings
- This study revealed a complex network of factors which influence how well refugee parents are able to envisage their families' futures, and which determine their capacity to support their children in achieving their ambitions. Practical issues such as their level of English language skills and their access to and understanding of the Australian education and employment systems were significant factors, but other influences, such as their own experiences of uncertainty and unpredictability, and their on-going concerns for relatives still in situations of danger, were also found to be significant.
- Whilst expressing their relief at being removed from danger and hardship, a high proportion of study participants also mentioned their concerns about family members still in their home or transit countries and named this as their greatest cause of stress.
- Bringing family members to join them in Australia was a priority for many in the study, as was the need to send funds to those still in refugee camps or transit countries. The experience of relief and looking forward with hope and anticipation for oneself and one's family, whilst remaining distressed by the separation from relatives still in danger, is acknowledged as a

fundamental factor in the refugee experience and a key barrier to moving on with life in resettlement.

- This study suggests that refugee families who have survived the trauma of persecution or war, and who have experienced the turmoil of flight and the struggle of seeking protection, are likely to have had far greater strains placed on their confidence in the predictability and stability of their environment. Uncertainty about the whereabouts, wellbeing and future of relatives still seeking resettlement, and frustrated attempts to reunite families through family migration programs can further diminish a person's resettlement and undermine confidence in the cohesiveness of the family unit.
- The authors argue that, in meeting the needs and improving the mental health of recently arrived refugees, it is important that resettlement countries provide sufficient resources to support their financial and material security and within an environment in which people feel empowered to use them. Creating such an environment involves addressing policy and bureaucratic issues such as the complicated process of family reunion.

Chakma, S. (2005). *Hopes Fulfilled or Dreams Shattered? From resettlement to settlement Conference, November 23-28, 2005. Background Paper: Refugee Family Reunification,* **Centre for Refugee Research, UNSW**

This background paper critically analyses the refugee family reunification policy of the Australian government against the backdrop of various international policies regarding the family reunion of refugees. Three case studies of refugee experiences are presented to demonstrate the impact of Australian government policy on family reunification.

Methodology
- Interviews with two refugees on permanent protection visas (PPVs) and one refugee on a temporary protection visa (TPV).
- Case studies highlight the discrepancy and impact of policies relating to family reunification for PPVs and TPVs.
- Literature review.

Major findings
- The author argues that Australia's policy of detention and temporary protection visas prohibits refugees from reuniting with their families for several years, acting as a "secondary detention" for refugees.
- Various regional and international instruments recognise the family as the basic unit upon which society is organised and its right to protection by society and by the State. These include: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Unlike Australia, other countries that have temporary protection visas for refugees entitle these visa holders to family reunion.

Colic-Peisker, V. and Tilbury, F. (2003). '"Active" and "Passive" Resettlement: The Influence of Support Services and Refugees' own Resources on Resettlement Style' in *International Migration,* 41(5), pp. 61-91

This paper explores the process of resettlement among recent refugees in Perth, Western Australia. The authors propose four refugee resettlement styles created through the interaction of a number of factors. These factors can be clustered as: (1) the social features of refugees (their human, social, and cultural capital), and (2) the host society's responses to refugee settlers (Australia's resettlement policy and services and the broader influence of the host society's responses to refugees). The authors propose that refugees approach their resettlement in predominantly active ("achievers" and "consumers") or passive ("endurers" and "victims") ways and that these are differentially successful strategies.

Methodology
- Interviews, focus groups, and participant observation with more than 200 refugees from the former Yugoslavia and the Horn of Africa in Perth, Western Australia who arrived during the 1990s and 2000s, as well as 40 resettlement service providers.

Major findings
- The locus of control refugees have during their resettlement – themselves, their families, communities, service providers, the government – as well as the sense of their own ability to overcome practical and emotional difficulties in the resettlement process depends on many factors, among which the authors emphasise refugees' own resources (human and social capital) and support services provided upon arrival in Australia.
- For most of the respondents in this study, the important conditions for re-establishing a normal life included: primarily stable housing, employment, regular income, and family reunion, and then also a sense of community, language skills, and citizenship.

Connell, J., Mulvey, G., Brady, J. and Christie, G. (2010). '*One Day We Will Be Reunited': Experiences of Refugee Family Reunion in the UK*. Glasgow: Scottish Refugee Council
http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/0099/Family_reunion_research_someday_we_will_be_reunited.pdf

This report analyses the application process in the United Kingdom for refugees applying to be reunited with their families under the UK's immigration rules and the experiences of refugees in Scotland and professionals across the UK of this process. The objectives of the study were to: (1) highlight the state of knowledge of family reunion in the UK; (2) explore refugees' experiences and understanding of the family reunion process in the UK; (3) investigate key agencies' understanding and experience of the family reunion process in the UK and (4) make recommendations based on the findings to improve refugees' access to, and experience of, family reunion.

Methodology
- In-depth review on existing literature on family reunification and the refugee experience.
- Data from 21 semi-structured questionnaires administered to refugee professionals from agencies who work with refugee communities.
- Semi-structured interviews with 11 refugees.
- The authors also conducted an analysis of case studies from the Scottish Refugee Council's case files.

Major findings
- This report suggests that the most fundamental argument that can be made in support of family reunion is that, until the point at which families are reunited, settlement stresses are compounded by worries and uncertainty about the safety of family members left behind.
- Professionals working with refugees who participated in this study identified negative emotional, physical and practical implications their clients faced due to family separation. They reported notable positive mental wellbeing and integration changes upon family reunification.
- Refugees interviewed as part of this study identified reuniting with family members as of the highest importance. When asked about the major impacts of separation, respondents highlighted the negative impacts upon their mental and physical health and wellbeing – referring to feelings of isolation, stress, loneliness, depression and guilt. As well as worrying about the physical safety and wellbeing of their loved ones, many participants referred to the stress and strain of having to continue to financially support their family members abroad.
- The authors argue there is a strong link between family reunion and integration, and that settlement support (e.g. help in obtaining work, education and language training) may be rendered worthless if refugees are not able to rebuild their lives with their families.

European Council on Refugees and Exiles (2000). *European Council on Refugees and Exiles Position on Refugee Family Reunification,* **ECRE**

In this position paper, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) has compiled the views of its member agencies with regard to how family reunification for refugees and people with other forms of protection should be organised.

Methodology
- Position paper that compiles the views of member agencies, consisting of over 65 refugee-assisting non-governmental agencies throughout Europe.
- Outlines legal frameworks pertaining to family reunification.

Major findings
- ECRE notes that the presence of one's family is an important factor affecting refugees' ability to settle and integrate in the country of durable asylum.
- Although a number of international and European legal instruments uphold family unity and protection, with the exception of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, no instrument specifically provides for a right to enter and remain in a particular country for the purposes of family reunification.
- Children are identified as a priority in family reunification procedures in view of the potential harm caused by long periods of separation from parents.
- ECRE puts forward a range of specific policy recommendations in relation to: the definition of the family unit, family unity during the asylum procedure, the family reunification procedure and its length, tracing, priority cases, documentary evidence of family ties, the legal status and rights of family members, and the role of NGOs.

Gray, A. and Elliot, S. (2001). *Refugee Resettlement Research Project. 'Refugee Voices'. Literature Review.* **New Zealand Immigration Service, NZ.**

The Refugee Resettlement Research Project (Refugee Voices) was developed by the New Zealand Immigration Service to fill an information gap on the experiences of refugees resettling in New Zealand. This literature review was part of the first phase of the Project. The review aimed to: (1) help interested parties understand more fully the process of refugee resettlement, and (2) summarise some of the key factors or barriers that impact on this resettlement.

Methodology
- Literature review

Major findings
- Family reunion is a high priority for all refugees, both for the safety of family members and to meet their own emotional and practical needs. Family reunion is of particular importance in cultures where family is the only trusted source of childcare.
- Refugee experiences of men and women can be very different. Traditional gender roles can be affected by disruption of status and power hierarchies, geographical dispersal of kin and friendship networks, new residence patterns, loss of economic resources, differential access to new resources, shifts in work patterns, exposure to strangers with different lifestyles and different expectations. For women without protection from traditional family networks, men may be more likely to physically abuse their wives.
- Women without partners tend to be a particularly vulnerable group and are disadvantaged in terms of access to information, social support and socio-economic status. Compared with women refugees with partners, women without partners in Australia were more likely to suffer ill health; both physically and mentally, and to have nightmares. They were also less likely to receive help from government employees, to make new friends and get social support, to earn money or to drive cars.

- The separation of families between countries can also lead to financial pressures, with family members living in the host country feeling a duty to support others still living overseas, to send money, support them and seek to bring them to New Zealand.

John, A. (2003). 'Family Reunification for Migrants and Refugees: A Forgotten Human Right? A Comparative Analysis of Family Reunification under Domestic Law and Jurisprudence, International and Regional Instruments, ECHR Caselaw and the EU 2003 Family Reunification Directive', *University of Coimbra Human Rights Center Working Paper.* www.fd.uc.pt/hrc/working_papers/arturojohn.pdf

This article examines why family reunification rights for migrants and refugees have not been recognised or put into practice and how European States and Courts have avoided taking the step from recognising a universal right to respect for one's family life to recognising the fundamental right of aliens to family reunification. The thesis focuses on European regional and domestic legislation and case law.

Methodology
- Comparative analysis of family reunification under domestic law and jurisprudence, international and regional instruments, ECHR caselaw and the EU 2003 Family Reunification Directive.
- Compares different European states' laws regarding refugees and family reunion.
- References landmark legal cases.

Major findings
- In view of the vulnerable position migrants and refugees find themselves in, the right to family reunification may be viewed as an even more essential right than the general right to respect for one's family life.
- The author argues that family reunification is both essential to the individual's well-being and in the interests of the receiving State.
- Whilst international bodies such as the ILO and UNHCR, academics and civil society may concur upon the importance of family reunification, the author suggests that this recognition has not been translated into an effective and enforceable right to family reunification at the international or regional level, and that a very conservative approach has so far been taken in relation to the right to family reunification, both by States and Courts.
- That author argues that family reunification is an issue in which economic interests and policies influenced by some of the electorate have superseded basic, fundamental principles of fair treatment and respect for one's family life.

Ketelers, J. (2009). *Revaluing family as the first centre of protection, self-reliance and solidarity.* **Submitted to the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 10 December 2009, Geneva. International Catholic Migration Commission** http://www.icmc.net/system/files/activity/revluaing_family_as_the_first_centre_of_protection_92656.pdf

This submission on behalf of the International Catholic Migration Commission to the UN High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges in December 2009 focuses on the experiences of ICMC's work in the Middle East with refugees and IDPs and proposes a revaluation of family as the cornerstone of protection, self-reliance and solidarity.

Methodology
- Draws on the experience of ICMC in working with over 36,000 refugees and IDPs in towns and cities in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Pakistan and Turkey, with health, education, livelihood and other supports, including of host families and nationals, as well as in outreach, identification, protection and resettlement of fragilised families and other refugees.

- Findings from two ICMC studies specifically focused on the urban aspects of displacement.

Major findings
- Refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless persons often see migration and make migration decisions – and return, remigration and onward migration decisions – as *family* strategies for survival or unity. The author argues that family is the axle on which substantial movements of men, women and children turn today.
- It is time to return to the recognition that family is the most natural unit of protection. Citing an ICMC study on Iraqi refugees in urban Jordan, the author observed: "Evidence suggests that those who are unable to reunite with their family and community structures are broadly the most vulnerable among Iraqis displaced in the region."
- The submission calls for a closer look at the "family-isation of migration"; broadly seeing family not only as the holder of the right to unity, but as the first actor and centre of quite practical protection, self-reliance and solidarity. This includes the need for more research and evidence-based policy-building on restoring and reinforcing family in the context of forced displacement and migration. The author argues this will permit more full investment in what is, evidence shows, "the family dividend": building blocks of community, social stability and cohesion.

Luster, T., Qin, D. B., Bates, L., Johnson, D. J. and Rana, M. (2008). 'The Lost Boys of Sudan: Ambiguous Loss, Search for Family and Reestablishing Relationships with Family Members' in *Family Relations,* 57, October 2008, pp. 444-456

The purpose of this study was to better understand young Sudanese refugees' experiences of separation and ambiguous loss and their efforts to re-establish relationships with surviving members of their families on another continent. Focusing on Sudanese refugees in the United States who had been successful in finding family members and who, at the time of the study, were re-establishing relationships with parents and siblings who live in Sudan and neighbouring countries, the study addressed the following research questions: (a) How did the youth describe their experiences of separation and ambiguous loss? (b) What supports and relationships sustained them during the period of separation? (c) How did the Sudanese youth re-establish relationships with surviving members of their families and what was their experience of reunification like?

Methodology
- In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 refugees in the United States who had located surviving family members in Sudan after an average separation of 13.7 years.
- Interviews were semi-structured and consisted of four parts: (a) who the youth lived with in Sudan and how they became separated from their families, (b) how they coped while they were separated from their families and their experiences of ambiguous loss, (c) how they were able to locate their families, and (d) their experiences of reconnecting with family members.

Major findings
- The authors found that young people newly reconnected with family faced multilayered responsibilities that place almost impossible demands on them: to get an education, financially support the family, and help the nation.
- Parents in these new transnational families can provide affective support but are unlikely to be able to offer instrumental support. Role reversals occur in many immigrant families when children take on parentified role after migration (e.g. translating for parents, filling out forms).
- Because financial support for parents and siblings is a cultural rather than a legal obligation for the Sudanese, it is not considered in determination of eligibility for some kinds of assistance, such as financial aid for education. The authors argue that refugee resettlement policy should recognise the unique situation of this group, respect cultural definitions of family, and provide sufficient support to maximise their prospects for success.
- The authors conclude that, as a nation that values the family as the basic unit of society, US immigration policy as it relates to unaccompanied refugee youth should promote family reunification as a social benefit to both the youth and the society.

McDonald-Wilmsen, B. and Gifford, S. (2009). *Refugee resettlement, family separation and Australia's humanitarian programme.* **New Issues in Refugee Research, Research Paper No. 178, UNHCR**
http://www.law4community.org.au/scope/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/UNHCR-report-Refugee-Settlementpdf.pdf

This research explores the roles that families play in building a cohesive and inclusive society and explores whether Australia's immigration policies used to select the "family" uphold the meaning of family for refugee and humanitarian entrants. The paper describes the lived experience of Australia's immigration policies and the consequences for settlement.

Methodology
- Literature review
- Policy analysis
- Primary research involving 41 Afghan, Burmese (Karen) and Sudanese refugees in Melbourne, Australia. In depth qualitative data gathered through three focus groups and 15 individual interviews. Participants were selected who were either: (i) Currently separated from family and seeking reunion; (ii) recently reunited with family members; or, (iii) reunited for at least two years with family members.

Major findings
- The mismatch between participants' definition of family and the Australian Government's was a point of both frustration and devastation for participants.
- The refugee experience reconfigures the family in ways that it would not be otherwise. Families of circumstance are created by conflict, flight and refuge.
- Separation compromises the psychological health and wellbeing of refugees. Concern about family is the most common issue associated with depression, anxiety and somatisation. Separation from family has also been shown to maintain or exacerbate trauma reactions.
- Participants identified that their worry about family members still overseas contributed to their difficulty in learning the new language. Many participants felt that gaining full-time employment to enable them to send remittances back to family overseas was a priority over learning the new language or other study.
- Separation impacts on participation and prevents a person taking advantage of new opportunities and planning for the future. Participants who had relatively intact families were more forward looking and positive about the future.
- Family separation places significant financial strain on families who have low incomes that are already stretched.
- The paper proposes four key principles that reaffirm the place of families as the fundamental social unit vital to human flourishing: (1) Humanitarian resettlement and family reunion policies should respect the right to family unity and where possible support the existing configurations of refugee background families in settlement and reunion; (2) Humanitarian resettlement and family reunion policies should not discriminate against any person; (3) Families are dynamic and require flexible humanitarian policies to allow for changes or discrepancies during processing and after resettlement; and (4) Given that refugee and humanitarian entrants by definition cannot return, non-humanitarian immigration policies should include special concessions for persons from refugee background families to preserve their family structures.

McMichael, C. and Ahmed, M. (2003). 'Family separation: Somali Women in Melbourne' in *Refugee rights monograph,* **Deakin University, Melbourne.**
http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts-ed/ccg/rsg/pdfs/c-mcmichael.pdf

This article focussed on refugee resettlement and the impact of family separation on the experiences of Somali refugee women in Melbourne. The paper sought to explore how narratives of loneliness and sadness are constructed around family separation for refugee women who remain concerned about family members still overseas.

Methodology
- Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 42 Somali women who used the services of the Migrant Resource Centre in Melbourne's northern suburbs.
- 33 interviews were conducted in Somali, with one of the co-authors acting as interpreter, key informant and co-researcher.

Major findings
- This paper configures women's suffering as more than the psychology of the traumatised refugee. The authors argue that refugee health and well-being are also significantly affected by the conditions of the country of resettlement.
- The interviews highlighted a number of issues affecting the well-being and adjustment of participants, with family separation emerging as the most pervasive source of emotional distress – from concern about family members back in Africa to a longing for the ties and support of family.
- Throughout the interviews women spoke of homesickness and loneliness because extended family is not with them and importantly, the compounded distress of navigating the administrative procedures required in applying for family reunification.
- Young mothers separated from their families and partners often talked of the strain of fulfilling parenting responsibilities. Women felt they had to be both a father and a mother to their children and were often overwhelmed by the pressure of these roles.
- The authors argue that programs and policy that aim to address the mental health needs of Somali women and other refugee populations must respond not only to pre-migration experiences and trauma, but also the vicissitudes of family separation. This includes not only interventions to ameliorate the impact of family separation following resettlement, but also changes to immigration policy in order that refugees have the opportunity to be reunited with family members and re-establish a sense of community.

McMichael, C. and Manderson, L. (2004). 'Somali Women and Well-Being: Social Networks and Social Capital among Immigrant Women in Australia' in *Human Organization,* Vol.63, No.1, 2004, pp.88-99

Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in Melbourne in 2000-2001, the authors explore the impact of war, displacement and resettlement on social networks among newly arrived migrants. They authors explore the utility of social capital as a construct to understand "successful" resettlement.

Methodology
- In-depth interviews with 42 Somali women who arrived under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.
- Contextual data from spending time with people informally in their homes, attending social functions and celebrations, and through ongoing work at a Migrant Resource Centre.

Major findings
- The conditions of resettlement do not necessarily provide an environment that promotes social capital.
- Despite instances of solidarity and support, including both formal and informal community activities and structures, women have an overriding sense that social networks have been eroded and fractured. This is a significant source of sadness, distress, anxiety and depression.
- Family separation, dissolution of social networks following war and displacement, and the conditions of resettlement combine to undermine the possibility of community cohesion, at least in the short term.

Refugee Council of Australia (2011). "Chapter 5: Family reunion and the Special Humanitarian Program" in *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2011-12: Community views on current challenges and future directions*, RCOA, Sydney, pp.110-127

Documents community views on policy and pathways to family reunion for refugee and humanitarian entrants in Australia.

Methodology
- National community consultations involving 230 people from across Australia's eight states and territories
- Policy review
- Literature review

Major findings
- There is a growing body of research suggesting that the prolonged separation of refugee families has a far-reaching impact on those who have been resettled. The negative psychosocial, economic and social consequences of family separation were clearly identified in consultations, as were the potential benefits to individuals, families and the broader Australian community of ensuring there is timely humanitarian family reunion.
- The main concerns raised about family reunion for humanitarian entrants included: the insufficient number of places for family reunion with the Australian Humanitarian Program; the restrictive definition of "family" applied by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) failing to take full account of actual family structures and dependency; the very limited access to affordable migration advice; difficulties in the application process (including the complexity of forms, the time taken to determine applications, the inadequacy of feedback to unsuccessful applicants and unreasonable expectations about availability of supporting documentation); the impacts of the "time of decision" requirement and the long processing times on split family applications from unaccompanied humanitarian minors; the difficulties faced in reuniting family through the Migration Program; and the separation of families through resettlement to different countries.

Rousseau, C., Rufagari, M., Bagilishya, D. and Measham, T. (2004). 'Remaking family life: strategies for re-establishing continuity among Congolese refugees during the family reunification process' in *Social Science & Medicine* 59 (2004), pp.1095–1108

This longitudinal study documents the pre- and post-reunification experiences of 12 refugee families from the Democratic Republic of Congo in Montreal. The objective of this paper is to describe the reunification process in refugee families and to examine the strategies that enable them to re-establish continuity despite their many long separations.

Methodology
- Interviews with 12 reunited families from the Democratic Republic of Congo living in Montreal.
- Interviews had a quantitative component, for which several assessment instruments were used, and a qualitative component based on semi-structured interviews on key topics.

Major findings
- The restrictive immigration and refugee policies of many Western countries force most refugee families to remain separated for long periods. People claiming refugee status face legal hurdles and are subjected to forms of "clean violence", a form of violence associated with technocratic organisations that is more subtle but as damaging as other forms of organisational violence.
- The post-migration experience of long waits – first to obtain refugee status, then the interminable delays before the family arrives – are a form of paradox: many people expect to feel relieved, but although they acknowledge the value of the personal safety they enjoy in the host country, they almost always feel bitter and disappointed, if not angry.

- The study found that the powerlessness that the subjects feel when separated from their families makes them question their identity, the meaning of life, even their very desire to live. In some stories, the authors found that despair dominates, and suicide, a last resort (it being a direct transgression of Congolese cultural values), is mentioned implicitly or explicitly.
- As in the case of other migrants, separations and cultural uprooting change refugee family relationships, roles and strategies. Once the family has been reunited, it has another crisis to face in trying to unite members who may have had very different experiences. The longer the family has been apart, the harder it is for them to regain their balance.
- Clinical work with families in the process of being reunited could focus on the ambiguous losses associated with the separation and reunification process. Clinical and community intervention can help the refugee come to terms with these ambiguous losses by allowing them to be named in the present and situated in continuity with their history of past losses. The authors argue that the link with the past would help people to regard loss and longing as a source of strength as well as fragility.

Rousseau, C., Mekki-Berrada, A. and Moreau, S. (2001). 'Trauma and extended separation from family among Latin America and African refugees in Montreal' in *Psychiatry,* 64 (1), pp. 40-59

This study explores the relationship between trauma and extended family separation. The authors used data from a survey conducted to determine the impact of immigration policies of Western countries like Canada on the mental health of refugees. The survey looked particularly at the influence of separation from family in groups of refugees coming from two different geo-cultural zones. The research focuses on two key questions: (1) Does the interaction between pre-migration personal and family trauma and extended separation from the family have an impact on refugees' degree of emotional distress? and (2) What personal and family mechanisms might explain the interaction between separation and trauma in refugee groups coming from contrasting contextual and cultural backgrounds?

Methodology
- A total of 113 refugees from Latin America and Africa who were living in Montreal participated.
- Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and by administering instruments to measure mental health variables.
- 20 life stories were documented of those whose family situations (separated, reunited, migration as a family) represented the different situations encountered by the subject.
- The authors undertook quantitative analysis of mental health survey data as well as a qualitative analysis of life stories using content analysis focusing on separation and trauma.

Major findings
- The pattern and impact of family separation is similar across a number of cultures which suggests that it is common across refugee communities.
- The joint occurrence of trauma and separation has a significant impact on emotional distress. Family separation compounds bereavement and post-traumatic reactions. The authors found that some refugees are overcome with guilt and find it difficult to define themselves and restore their identity while they remain separated from their families.
- Family separation creates fear that relationships will be greatly changed. These fears are confirmed by the accounts of refugees who have been reunited with their spouse and children, with evidence of family break-up.
- The authors argue that greater academic interest in trauma than separation reflects the political dimension of these phenomena: armed conflict and war trauma are seen as the violence of others, whereas an examination of prolonged separations highlights Western administrative violence.
- The relationship between trauma and psychological distress is reversed when refugees are with all or part of their family. The authors conclude that family play an important role in

anchoring emotion and identity and argue that the presence of family during the resettlement process aids in the development of a meaningful life.

Schweitzer, R., Brough, M., Vromans, L. and Asic-Kobe, M. (2011). 'Mental health of newly arrived Burmese refugees in Australia: contributions of pre-migration and post-migration experiences' in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry,* 2011 Early online, pp.1-9

This study documents the mental health status of people from Burmese refugee backgrounds recently arrived in Australia, exploring the contributions of gender, pre-migration and post-migration factors in predicting mental health.

Methodology
- 70 adult participants across five Burmese ethnic groups in Queensland.
- Structured interviews and quantitative analysis.
- Data collected through various instruments including a demographic questionnaire. The Harvard Trauma Questionnaire, the Post-migration Living Difficulties Checklist and Hopkins Symptom Checklist assessed pre-migration trauma, post-migration living difficulties, depression, anxiety, somatisation and traumatisation symptoms

Major findings
- A significant proportion of participants reported psychological distress in symptomatic ranges including: post-traumatic stress disorder (9%), anxiety (20%) and depression (36%), as well as significant symptoms of somatisation (37%).
- Post-migration living difficulties of greatest concern included communication problems and worry about family not in Australia.
- Level of exposure to traumatic events and post-migration living difficulties each made unique and relatively equal contributions to traumatisation symptoms.
- While exposure to traumatic events impacted on participants' mental well-being, post-migration living difficulties had greater salience in predicting mental health outcomes of people from Burmese refugee backgrounds.

Schweitzer, R., Greenslade, J. and Kagee, A. (2007). 'Coping and resilience in refugees from the Sudan: A narrative account' in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry,* 41(3), pp. 282-288

The purpose of this study was to identify and explicate coping and resilience themes employed by 13 resettled Sudanese refugees.

Methodology
- Qualitative data gathered through 13 semi-structured interviews with Sudanese refugees in Queensland.
- Participants were asked to describe the coping mechanisms they utilised during the three phases of migration (pre-migration in Sudan, in transit and post migration in Australia)
- Researchers developed the 'Refugee Stress and Resilience Interview Protocol' to conduct semi-structured interviews

Major findings
- The data revealed that participants identified several strengths and resources that allowed them to cope with pre-migration, transition and post-migration stressors. These coping responses included family and community support, religion, personal qualities and comparison with others.
- Pre-migration stressors included separation from family.
- Existence of family and community support emerged as a salient coping strategy.

- The study highlights the role of family and community in enabling people who have been exposed to significant traumatic events to make meaning of those events.

Schweitzer, R., Melville, F., Steel, Z. and Lacherz, P. (2006). 'Trauma, post-migration living difficulties and social support as predictors of psychological adjustment in resettled Sudanese refugees' in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 40(2), pp.179-187

This study explored the pre-migration trauma, post-migration living difficulties and the social support effects upon the current mental health of Sudanese refugees living in Australia.

Methodology
- A total of 63 Sudanese refugees living in Queensland participated.
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted which included questionnaires assessing socio-demographic information, pre-migration trauma, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress, post-migration living difficulties and perceived social support.

Major findings
- The researchers found that although trauma is a significant predictor of mental health, post-migration experiences are also of importance in predicting psychological wellbeing.
- Post-migration experiences comprise both difficulties and levels of social support. With regard to post-migration difficulties, the most common items endorsed by refugees in the study referred to concerns about family not living in Australia, difficulties in employment, and difficulties adjusting to cultural life in Australia. Such living difficulties were associated with increased depression, anxiety and somatisation.
- Social support variables are of particular salience in determining psychological wellbeing. Specifically, the presence of family, and social support from others within the Sudanese community, were found to be significant determinants of mental health functioning, while social support from the wider community was not.

Shakespeare-Finch, J. and Wickham, K. (2010). 'Adaptation of Sudanese refugees in an Australian context: Investigating helps and hindrances' in *International Migration,* 48(1), pp.23-46

This study investigated the experiences of Sudanese refugees by exploring the themes that characterise participants' experiences in Sudan, en route, and at their Australian destination. In particular, the research identifies several factors that may be seen as 'helps' or 'hindrances' to Sudanese refugees' adaptation.

Methodology
- Participants were 12 Sudanese refugees who had resided in Australia for one to five years and were living in Hobart, Tasmania.
- Researchers used a modified version of Schwietez et al 2007 (above) 'Refugee Stress and Resilience Interview Protocol' to conduct semi-structured interviews.
- A qualitative phenomenological approach to data collection and analysis was employed.

Major findings
- All participants identified hindrances to their adaptation to life in Australia including "homesickness and separation from family".

Simich, L., Beiser, M. and Mawani, F. N. (2003). 'Social Support and the Significance of Shared Experience in Refugee Migration and Resettlement' in *Western Journal of Nursing Research,* 25(7), pp.872-891.

This article examines the role of social support as a determinant of refugee well-being and migration patterns during early resettlement. The study describes refugees' decision making during stages of migration and resettlement, from whom they seek social support in particular situations, what sources are appraised as most important, and what is significant about the support.

Methodology
- Analysis is based on qualitative in-depth interviews with 47 government-assisted refugees in Canada and 38 key informants (settlement service providers and immigration officials) in Canada and overseas.

Major findings
- The authors found that for newcomers arriving as refugees, especially in the stressful early settlement period before social competence in the adopted society is attained, receiving affirmation from familiar others is critical. They found that affirmational support provides not only emotional coping assistance but also a cultural bridge in adaptation through shared experience. The need for this type of support proved to be the overriding concern for refugees interviewed in this study.
- The results of this study suggest that refugees' support needs may differ from those of other migrants and that secondary migration may be influenced more strongly by social support networks (the location of friends and family) than economic factors (jobs) or the broader social context (ethnic diversity of local community).
- Affirmation from familiar sources of social support (family, friends, and compatriots) likely enhances wellbeing and increases chances of a positive settlement outcome by increasing self-efficacy and self-esteem – in short, confidence that they will be able to cope in the new situation.
- Seeking support from people from the same background or country of origin who have gone through similar experiences with migrating and resettling is especially helpful because they have the same points of reference and likely have faced similar experiences and challenges with adjusting.
- The authors conclude that the principle of family reunification should be upheld in immigration policy and that health and social service providers acknowledge the protective resources that family, friends, and ethnic community supports provide.

Staver, A. (2008). *Family Reunification: A Right for Forced Migrants?* Working Paper Series No. 51, Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford.

This paper explores the core issues surrounding family reunification. The author explores the questions: Is there a right to family reunification for forced migrants? What is the scope of such a right? The author also explores the conflict between legal rights and immigration control, as family reunification brings out the conflict between individual and state interests. This hinges on a discussion on the meaning and extent of the family.

Methodology
- Examines relevant international legal instruments and literature from migration studies, political science and international law.
- Reviews material from advocacy organisations working on family reunification, some media coverage of current developments, particularly in Canada, along with material from certain UN organisations.

Major findings
- The precariousness of the refugee experience makes family relationships particularly vital. The family can be an important anchor in a social world turned upside down, sometimes remaining the only stable social structure in an otherwise disintegrated society.
- Until family reunification is achieved, settlement stresses are compounded by worries and uncertainty about the safety of family members left behind.
- The presence of family members facilitates the difficult process of moving on; one is no longer fixated on the object of reunification and anxious about the safety and whereabouts of loved ones.
- Families who score highly on coordination, defined as "the family's belief that they, in fact, occupy the same experiential world, a world which operates in the same way for all of them" (Reiss 1981 cited in Haour-Knipe 2001: 138), are particularly well equipped to adjust to a new environment. The author infers that long-term separation is detrimental to the integration of refugees into new societies.
- From an examination of international legal norms, the author concludes that there is an emerging, but fragile, right to family reunification that rests upon the human right to family unity. For many forced migrants, family reunification is the only way to ensure family unity. However, the right to family reunification is weakly codified, and very restricted.
- The author argues for the conceptualisation of family reunification as a duty of the state towards a forced migrant to ensure that he or she may live with those with whom he or she has a strong emotional bond. This highlights the specificity of forced migrants as they cannot pursue family life elsewhere, which would detach family reunification for forced migrants from regular immigration politics. At the same it emphasises the subjective nature of family ties, which can be accounted for on a case-by-case basis in a sound and humane family reunification policy.

Stoll, K. and Johnson, P. (2007). 'Determinants of the Psychosocial Adjustment of Southern Sudanese Men' in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(4), pp.621-640

This study examined the experiences and determinants of psychosocial adjustment of Sudanese refugees in Canada. The researchers placed specific attention on the financial and emotional strain of sending remittances to family back in Africa and the effects this has on psychosocial adjustment, testing the hypotheses that: (1) Greater financial and emotional role strain from enacting the global breadwinner role is predictive of psychosocial adjustment difficulties, and (2) Greater religiosity and more social support are predictive of improved psychosocial adjustment.

Methodology
- Questionnaire completed by 164 Southern Sudanese men living in Canada.
- The questionnaire utilised different scales to measure (i) Acculturative distress, (ii) Intercultural competence, (iii) Global breadwinner role strain (emotional and financial role strain) (iv) Spirituality, and (v) Social support.
- Quantitative analysis of findings.

Major findings
- Respondents showed an unwavering commitment to supporting family back in Africa whist settling into their new life in Canada.
- The authors found that financial strain affects social adjustment, suggesting that more financial strain means less time to socialise with friends and less money to afford leisure activities, dating (for single men), entertainment or transport.
- The most important variable that facilitated social adjustment was support from family and the wider Sudanese community.
- The study found that sending remittances back to Africa affected the social adjustment of respondents but not their emotional or psychological adjustment. This was explained through the positives that sending money back had on the respondents (i.e. remittances are regarded

as important social gestures that give the sender a sense of wellbeing, pride and dignity) and that this far outweighs the negative social adjustments of the refugees.

- An important policy implication for governments is to determine how current immigration policies of refugee resettlement and family unification exacerbate the financial and emotional strain of Sudanese refugees who are expected to provide financially for family members still in Africa. The authors argue that changes to family unification policy, such as reduced waiting times and financial criteria for sponsoring relatives, would greatly reduce the stress associated with supporting family in Africa.

Valtonen, K. (2004). 'From the Margin to the Mainstream: Conceptualising Refugee Settlement Processes' in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(1), pp.70-96

This article explores settlement processes and the difficulties experienced by refugee individuals and communities in Finland. The author explores the societal and institutional context of settlement, and how the formal status granted to refugees translates into actual participatory activity and linkages in the society.

Methodology
- 58 in-depth interviews with refugees from Vietnam (N = 29) and Iraq and Iran (N = 29) undertaken in 1993-94 in Turku, Finland.
- 181 individual, family and focus group interviews with refugees from Vietnam, Iraq, Iran, Cambodia and Somalia in 1997-98.
- Qualitative collective case study analysis and design.

Major findings
- Across the different communities studied, participants identified common goals of: (1) employment, (2) a place to study, (3) retention of own culture, (4) family reunification, (5) knowing what the settling person's rights and duties were in the society, and (6) reduction of negative stereotyping of refugees.
- Family reunification was an overriding goal for those whose families were still separated in the aftermath of flight. Across the groups, family reunification, when this was outstanding, was the only priority that superseded employment.
- Valtonen proposes a framework for evaluating the integration of refugees in resettlement countries that is predicated on a number of conditions: (1) *emancipation* (freedom from oppression), (2) *parity* (valorisation of resources and credentials), (3) *interdependence* (social bonds, reciprocity) and (4) *cultural integrity* (being able to shape the pace and terms of cultural adjustment). The author argues that integration is a continuing effort to attain and arrive at these conditions and is influenced by the institutional environment of the receiving country as well as the personal capacities of settling populations.

Waxman, P. (2001). 'The economic adjustment of recently arrived Bosnian, Afghan and Iraqi refugees in Sydney, Australia' in *The International Migration Review, 35 (2),* pp.472-505

This study explored the impacts of pre- and post-migration experiences on the initial economic adjustment of recently arrived refugees from Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq in Sydney. The author explores relationships between key experiences and characteristics (e.g. qualifications) of the refugee and their capacity to gain employment and financially adjust into their new community. The purpose of the research was to: (1) examine separately the impact that the pre-migration and post-migration experiences have on the economic adjustment of recently arrived humanitarian entrants from emerging communities, and (2) to provide a comparative analysis of the initial economic adaptation process of humanitarian entrants from various regional and ethnic backgrounds arriving in the receiving country at approximately the same time.

Methodology
- A literature review and preliminary interviews with service providers were used to identify two propositions and key variables to be tested.
- A survey of 162 recently arrived refugees from three target countries (Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq) living in Sydney were conducted and results were quantitatively analysed.
- Questionnaires were verbally administered to respondents by people from similar backgrounds.
- The questionnaire looked at key demographics including key information that may influence the respondent's capacity to gain employment (e.g. qualifications, level of formal education) and English language proficiency.

Major findings
- While the research found a number of significant relationships, lower English proficiency was found to be the major factor for unemployment.
- The research found that the heavy financial burden on those wishing to sponsor family members has forced a number of educated humanitarian entrants to accept unskilled work and forego attendance at English language classes, thus delaying their plans for further study or upgrading of qualifications. Once reunited with family, the author argues it is doubtful the sponsor will resume studies, confining sponsors to the secondary labour market.